



DELEDDA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

LANGUAGE POLICY

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Introduction

This document represents the DIS school-wide language policy. The DIS Language Policy is a set of principles which connects the IB philosophy and continuum and our school community. The document is updated regularly, based on our students' evolving needs and the latest IBO requirements which apply to our MYP and DP programmes.

“Deledda International School provides an international education that fosters academic growth within a caring community for students.

The School promotes the appreciation of the diversity of people and cultures, provides an environment conducive for learning and teaching, and offers a rigorous international curriculum that, in the lower years, is blended with the national Italian Curriculum.” (From: DIS Mission Statement, 2020)

The DIS mission statement is the foundation for our language policy. As language forms the basis for all learning, this policy is critical for helping the school to achieve its mission.

This policy outlines our school’s linguistic and academic goals and defines the programme which best assists our students to reach these goals.

As an IB World School, we are committed to the following Practices:

- The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).
- Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s). (IB Standard C4, Practice 1).
- The school utilises the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programmes (IB Standard B2, Practice 11)

The above statements are taken from the 2014 IBO Programme Standards and Practices.

School Language Philosophy

A thorough knowledge of one's mother tongue is essential to access knowledge in other subjects and learn new languages. Conversely, all teaching entails language and the teaching of language reflecting the IB holistic approach. The study of language promotes self-expression and understanding of communication as essential lifelong skills to master complex phenomena through different approaches, perspectives and subjects both during the students' IB experience and in the future. In an increasingly global and interconnected world, the study of languages promotes cultural understanding and international mindedness. The IBO and DIS believe that both the study of one's mother tongue and the study of foreign languages are key in the development of "inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect [... and] encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right." (IBO mission statement)

In brief, at Deledda International School (DIS) we strongly believe that:

- Language is a fundamental mean of communicating and learning in all subject groups
- The acquisition of language is a life-long process and a key component of intellectual and personal growth
- Language is a tool for self-expression
- Language is an expression of culture and valued as an integral aspect of a student's identity
- Development of one's mother-tongue language is critical for maintaining one's cultural identity
- All teachers are language teachers
- Learning world languages is an integral part of becoming a global citizen.

The school language profile

Deledda International School is situated in the city of Genova. We have a very low student turnover with nearly all of our students spending more than 5 years with us. This gives us the chance to create a school where our students can learn together, taking academic steps in unison.

The Primary School

Formed in September 2016 with two sections of 5th grade Elementary students, it consists of grades from 1 to 5. The Elementary School operates as most Italian state schools do but with an added emphasis on the use of the English language. However, we aim to keep the teaching of key subjects in Italian so that students do not miss out on vital content. English is used often, but not exclusively, as we work in Italian for most of the lessons. Foreign students, not proficient in Italian should consider this carefully. However, where possible, the primary school strives to offer students whose mother tongue is English or have had experience learning in an English speaking context, the opportunity to continue to learn at their development level during English lessons.

We try to incorporate English into many lessons, meaning that access to English is encouraged but not at the expense of Italian. The IB highly encourages students to pursue the study of their mother-tongue, which is especially important at this age. Exposure to and experiences of learning English in meaningful contexts are encouraged through transdisciplinary learning and teaching. Exposure to the English language is enhanced in grade 5 to support students in making the transition from our primary school into the Middle Years Programme.

When student numbers demand the division of year groups into sections, the decision is based on the class linguistic profile and classroom dynamics that arise in a particular year. Since we cannot forecast the number of students in coming years, we do not exclude the use of some form of entrance testing, if applications exceed capacity.

Our main aim is to create an environment that emphasises the importance of learning in a calm atmosphere, inviting good behaviour and focussing on key aspects of the IB Learner Profile.

The MYP

While the vast majority of our students come from the Italian community, pupils who join the school in MYP1 have a wide range of language abilities due to different language backgrounds.

Students who join the school in MYP1 might be streamed or placed in sections, based on English comprehension, depending on the linguistic profile of that year's intake.

In some class groups, the starting level might be high enough to allow English to be used as the language of communication from day 1. This allows the school to enrol international students with no knowledge of Italian. In other groups, teachers can use a mixture of Italian and English until the students' level of English allows them to study almost totally in English, normally by the end of MYP2.

Because the MYP demands that language acquisition lessons are taught with students of a similar phase or level, in some year groups, especially the younger classes, where there is a stark difference between levels, we normally use these class divisions as the basis for all of the other subjects too, since English is the language of instruction.

As students progress, the difference in ability between the proficient and emergent communicators generally reduces, allowing us to consider the use of other criteria for placing students. Once these differences in comprehension are less relevant to learning, as they normally become by MYP3, we can use other classroom-dynamic based criteria such as deciding whether to separate twins, the ratio between boys and girls or new students and old, etc. This can only be done as long as the difference between a student's English phase within their Language Acquisition class is a maximum of 2 phases per class section, following MYP guidelines.

Since levels change continuously, students can be moved from one section to another after the annual September class-setting meetings, drawing on previous years' grades, formative assessment and placement tests after the long summer holiday.

In order to strengthen English acquisition in the first three years of the Middle Years Program, in 2020 DIS introduced Pathways: a course of study which runs parallel to, and is complimentary of, our MYP programme in MYP1, 2 and 3. What it adds, however, is a more concrete approach to English in terms of levels of achievement. By using CEFR (Common European Framework) steps, students and their families can measure progress following a well recognized path, seeing exactly what level a student is at and what needs to be done to progress. It also enables students outside of the school to align their own abilities to our standards in preparation for a possible entrance to DIS that year, or further ahead.

In Pathways-myp1, teachers concentrate on 'comprehension' ensuring that the students are able to understand the lessons which will be in English in the following years. In Pathways-myp2 the students also need to be able to produce the language and teaching and learning is then focused on reading, writing and listening. Students in Pathways-myp3 focus on: reading, writing, use of English, listening and speaking at a B2 level of CEFR.

Italian Mother Tongue Programmes

Practically all of our students speak Italian as their mother-tongue. For the teaching of Italian up to MYP3, we follow national standards, but use IB principles and practices. In MYP3, in order to prepare our students for the national Italian 3° Media exams in all subjects, much of the content taught and some class materials may be in Italian. The choice of the language of instruction should be based on the particular needs of the exam.

This aligns with IB policy on the importance of maintaining a student's mother-tongue.

English Mother Tongue Programmes

For those students whose mother-tongue is English, who are known as Language A English speakers, the school is available to set a Language A course against a fee and assess them against Language A objectives.

The language Profile and skills of new students are assessed before we decide admission and course (Language A versus Language B). So far we didn't recognize the need to have a Language A course, but if this need arises this option is available against a fee.

Some students will achieve proficiency in English earlier than others and may be considered "Language A English speakers" earlier than MYP 5, when the majority of students, from our experience, achieve this level of ability. These students too could access a Language A course, as deemed appropriate by their teachers.

The Non-Italian Community

Those students arriving from abroad or with non-Italian family backgrounds, could have difficulty understanding some parts of some lessons, meetings or communications delivered in Italian so we encourage them all to learn Italian.

There is a diversity of language needs in the school and students with a different mother tongue, not Italian or English, have the option to continue studying it at DIS, as the IBO suggests. So, when the need arises, provision in other languages can be made (Portuguese, Swedish, Farsi, Japanese, Russian, etc. are just some of the languages DIS students have studied in the past as Language A).

Italian as a Foreign Language (Language Acquisition) is available to all non-Italian students, during the Language Acquisition hours.

Since the world is ever-more international, every year we find students with complex language profiles and we try our best to accommodate them.

English as a Foreign Language

English is considered as a foreign language for practically all of our students until the end of MYP5 and is taught following the IB phases system for Language Acquisition. "Phase Placement is informed by knowledge of the student's language profile. This will help to know and understand the language background, the language experience and the language needs of the student". (www.ibo.org)

By MYP 5, many of our students achieve a linguistic level that would allow them to study English as Language A (Language & Literature) in the DP. This enables the school to offer a wider choice of subjects in the Diploma Programme.

From MYP4 onwards the language of instruction for all subjects, apart from Italian and foreign languages, is English, whereas in the earlier years Italian is sometimes needed to facilitate comprehension. By the end of MYP 4, we expect all of our students to have achieved MYP Phase 5 or 6 in ability in English.

MYP Language Acquisition Policy (not English/Italian)

All of our students study a 3rd Language besides English in Language Acquisition classes.

We currently offer **French, Spanish, German and Chinese**, which are also taught in phases.

New students entering the school after the start of the MYP 5-year cycle must be able to enter the class at the same phase, or one phase above or below, of the year group they are entering. If their level is not adequate, they would be expected to study before being accepted, or choose another language. This selection depends on demand and can change from year to year.

All of these languages start in MYP1 from zero. By MYP4, when we often get new students, the approximate level is A2 (CEFR) in all of our language courses..

Language Catch Up Club

Every year we have offered a Catch Up Club after school where students can stay and get extra help from our older students who are more proficient in the language. The DP students do this as a CAS project. Students have helped with all of the languages we offer: English, Spanish, French, German and Mandarin. In addition, our students who need to work on their Italian are often helped as well. Now during the pandemic, the lessons are on Zoom.

Learning about the host country or regional language & culture

In all of our Language A and Italian language acquisition classes, students learn about the language and culture through a variety of activities, texts, videos, etc. When learning a language it is essential to learn about the people, traditions and culture of the country or countries and the various regions in order to better understand the language and its people. For our students studying Italian as a second language, part of the curriculum is helping them to not only understand the Italian language, but to get to know the particular customs and traditions, history, geography and regions of Italy as well as our city of Genova, its people, food, customs, traditions and particulars of the city.

Diploma Programme

School community

Most of our students enrol in MYP1 or 4, and therefore the school community is often very similar in MYP and DP, with most students following the continuum. A few students join our classes in DP1 after a selection process designed to assess their language profile and abilities.

Organization of Group 1 and Group 2 Subjects

At DIS, the DP is designed as a continuum from the MYP programme. The school offers Group 1: Italian A: Literature and Italian A: Language & Literature and English A: Language & Literature (High Level: five hours a week, Standard Level: three hours a week) as well as several languages taught as the third language within Group 2: Mandarin Ab Initio, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish B (Ab Initio: three hours a week, Standard: three hours a week and Higher Level: five hours a week). Other languages may be available on demand. For example, in the past, Portuguese, Swedish, Farsi, and Russian, etc. are just some of the languages DIS DP students have studied in the past as Language A in order to continue their study of their mother tongue language..

All students must study a Language A, either Italian or English. The level of language proficiency allows some of our students to undertake two Language A courses (Italian and English). English B HL was introduced several years ago and is now offered in the DP to ensure that those students, despite having taken English A in MYP5, may continue to improve their English language skills and not jeopardize their overall success in the DP. All DIS students take a Language B during MYP and can choose to continue studying it in the Diploma Programme depending on their study plan. Students' placement in DP courses occurs in the second part of MYP5.

In order to be recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education, the school offers three different tracks: linguistic, humanistic and scientific. Introductory meetings are held in MYP 3, MYP5 and DP1 to explain the nature of the programme. Students put together a programme of study in MYP 5. The school reviews the track and course of study chosen to ensure the requirements are met. Conferencing with MYP5 teachers, the school sometimes recommends or discourages some choices based on the students' language profile, needs and results.

At DIS, professional development is an ongoing process in which qualified teachers participate in regular workshops, work on collaborative planning, address vertical and horizontal implementation of the programme, discuss assessment criteria and work on standardization. The above activities are used as a basis to provide for the learning needs and development of students. The subject guides are the foundation of the syllabus, which is updated on a yearly basis and is available on the school website. Some choices in syllabus content are the result of discussion among colleagues and with students. Language teaching and learning allows for and encourages the use of different media and stimuli which accommodate different students' needs, learning styles and personal preferences. The nature and curriculum of the subjects in Groups 1 and 2 promote the development of awareness of local and global issues and respect of diversity and individuality.

Strategies to support all teachers in their contribution to the language development of students

It is an IB principle that all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication. A Maths teacher can pre-teach vocabulary in English before facing a topic in Maths, if it helps. All teachers aiming for full-time permanent contracts, must have a C1 certificate and level of

English (CEFR), unless they teach Italian or foreign languages. All staff should have a B1/B2 level of English/Italian in order to understand school-wide communications, which are in English and/or Italian.

As strategies to support teachers in their contribution to the language development of students::

- we encourage teachers to visit other teachers' lessons and observe their best practices also related to the use of language;
- we encourage language teachers to organize events in the language they teach (eg theater in English, lunches in German/Spanish/French/Chinese, ...);
- we encourage teachers to prepare posters in the language they teach to be in the schools corridors;
- We often do lunch duty/Villa Croce together with members of staff both mother tongue English and Italian. It also supports the development of the language in a real context and enables students to 'hear' how the language is spoken and used in an everyday and familiar setting.
- We promote school exchange at different ages with different cohorts in Europe and in the US.
- In the library we have different sections of books in various languages and we encourage students and teachers to borrow them.
- the school librarian liaises with teachers to teach the conventions of referencing, citation and the principles of academic honesty; and to ensure the provision of relevant mother tongue literature, newspapers and study resources.

Parents

DIS families are part of the school community and have communication in both Italian and English, depending on the issue, through parent evenings, parent workshops, newsletters, and individual parent-teacher conferences. We encourage them to provide access to the English language at home via subtitled TV, original version films, books from our library and internet site, etc.

Materials

The majority of our textbooks are in English, with the exception of those that are necessary for the preparation of the Terza Media Italian State Exams (MYP3) or when deemed otherwise by the subject-teacher.

Preferred bibliographic referencing styles & rules

The teachers of Deledda International School guide their students in the correct ways of acknowledging work of others when being cited or used as references within their coursework and assessments. This begins when students can understand the concepts of academic honesty and doing their own work. MYP Students should normally follow the format provided by the Modern Language Association (MLA: www.mla.org), while at DP level students will follow the referencing style chosen by their subject teacher. (see Deledda International School Academic Honesty Policy).

Policy alignment

...to Admission policy

We accept students at all levels of proficiency in English Language in our Primary School. To help families wishing to enter DIS, we often use CEFR levels to describe our work. By the end of MYP3, students must have a B2 level of English in order to proceed to MYP4 (decided at the Consiglio d'Istituto, June 14th 2017).

For those students entering our school at different stages in the process, we have minimum standards of achievement, corresponding to the CEFR system, to help us decide if a student can follow courses comfortably. These are detailed in the table below. By using the international CEFR system, we allow potential students to see what would be expected of them, if they were to enter our school. Years of experience allows the school to expect the following **minimum** levels of English, as of 2017.

End of MYP1 CEFR A2

End of MYP 2 CEFR B1

End of MYP 3 CEFR B2

MYP4 starting point is B2 (As agreed at 14th June 2017: Verbale: Consiglio d'istituto)

For the above-reasons, we currently use KET-style tests for MYP1 admissions and First Certificate for MYP4.

... to Assessment policy

Language learning follows distinct stages, students learning/ acquisition varies from individual to individual. Teachers will assess language skills - reading, speaking, writing, and listening regularly. Assessments will provide information on language growth and areas to work on.

At Deledda International School, all teachers are language teachers, and teachers encourage students to express themselves correctly in the relevant languages.

Therefore, when teaching subject-specific terminology and carrying out formative and summative assessment tasks, students' correct use of target language is taken into account.

Regardless of the subject group, all teachers give students feedback about correct language use. MYP report cards issued twice a year, student work in exhibitions, projects, portfolios, presentations, journals and performance tasks, all provide evidence of the feedback given to students.

... to Inclusion and Access policy

In line with the principle "All individuals can learn", language education of students with special educational needs in our School is based on the Inclusion and Access policy. Our Director, the MYP & DP

coordinator, the counselor and the relevant Class Coordinator are involved in the process of addressing the language learning needs of these students. Teachers develop tools that will support the individual language needs of SEN students and design individual examinations and assessments in consideration of their individual and developmental characteristics and the students' PDP (Personalized Didactical Plan).

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